

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4976

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 12606

KUWAIT PLEASE PASS USINT BAGHDAD FOR INFO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ECON, SY, IR

SUBJECT: SHAH GIVES SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD CORRECT BUT
WARY WELCOME

1. SYRIAN PRESIDENT AND MRS. ASAD ARRIVED IN TEHRAN DECEMBER 28 FOR FIRST STATE VISIT TO IRAN OF ANY SYRIAN HEAD OF STATE. THEY WERE MET BY SHAH AND EMPRESS FARAH AND ATTENDED STANDARD ROUND OF DINNERS AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENT DURING FOUR-DAY VISIT. DURING BANQUET FOR ASAD'S FIRST NIGHT OF VISIT (WHICH APPEARD TO BE RATHER STIFF AFFAIR, JUDGING FROM TELEVISION COVERAGE) SHAH MADE MUCH OF IRAN'S SUPPORT FOR UN EFFORTS TO REMOVE ISRAELI TROOPS FROM CAPTURED TERRITORIES, AS HE HAD AT PRESS CONFERENCE EARLIER IN DAY. ASAD'S REPLY REFERRED TO CHALLENGE OF "ZIONIST AGGRESSION" BUT HE SAID SYRIA WAS PLEDGED TO SEEK PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

2. PRESS COVERAGE OF ASAD VISIT DESCRIBED VISITOR AS "HARD WORKING, CAPABLE LEADER" WHO WAS "PERSONAL FRIEND OF IRAN". HE WAS ALSO TERMED AS "REALIST" WHO WAS TRYING TO RECONSTRUCT
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HIS COUNTRY IN WAKE OF WAR DAMAGES. IRAN'S ROLE IN

FINANCING SYRIAN DEVELOPMENT WAS HIGHLIGHTED, WITH STRESS ON \$150 MILLION LINE OF CREDIT ALREADY OFFERED (SEE TEHRAN 9806). (SYRIAN AMBASSADOR ALI MOHSEN ZEIFA TOLD NEWSMEN AT PRESS CONFERENCE THAT IRAN HAD "GIVEN" SYRIA A LOAN OF \$80 MILLION, WHICH MAY REFER TO MONEY ACTUALLY DISBURSED.) THERE WAS PRESS SPECULATION BEFORE END OF VISIT THAT LINE OF CREDIT TO SYRIA MIGHT BE FURTHER INCREASED AFTER CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF TWO COUNTRIES. (COMMENT: IN VIEW OF FACT SYRIAN MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE EMAMI WAS A MEMBER OF DELEGATION IT SEEMS ODD THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD HAVE TO BE POSTPONED.)

3. JOINT COMMUNIQUE EXPECTED TO BE ISSUED LATE DECEMBER 31.

4. CLANDESTINE RADIO IRAN COURIER, WHICH SERVES AS VOICE OF OUTLAWED TUDEH ("MASSES") COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN, NOTED CAIRO PRESS COMMENT THAT ASAD'S VISIT TO THERAN BETOKENED SHIFT AWAY FROM "LEFTIST AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS". BROADCAST THEN ENDED WITH DENIAL ATTRIBUTED TO "SYRIAN OFFICIAL SOURCES" AND CALLED FOR CONTINUING ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLES.

5. COMMENT: SHAH TOLD AMBASSADOR BEFORE ASAD ARRIVED THAT HE HAS FOR A LONG TIME FEARED DEVELOPMENT OF A "RED CRESCENT" HOSTILE TO IRAN INVOLVING SYRIA AND IRAQ IF TWO COUNTRIES COULD PATCH UP THEIR DIFFERENCES. THIS ATTITUDE DOUBTLESS LIES BEHIND CORRECT BUT WARY RECEPTION WHICH SHAH GAVE ASAD, AND ACCOUNTS FOR PUBLIC FOCUS ON LESS CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF IRAN-SYRIA RELATIONS SUCH AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. AMBASSADOR HAD IMPRESSION SHAH WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD DURING VISIT TO KEEP IRAQ AND SYRIA AT ODDS. DURING AUDIENCE DECEMBER 30 AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT SPECULATION SYRIANS MIGHT ASK IRAN TO ACCEPT PLO REPRESENTATION IN TEHRAN. SHAH SAID ASAD HIMSELF HAD NOT BROUGHT UP THIS ISSUE BUT IT HAD BEEN RAISED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF DELEGATION WITH GOI OFFICIALS, WHO HAD FINESSED MATTER FOR NOW. AFTER JOINT COMMUNIQUE IS ISSUED AND MFA OFFICIALS HAVE TIME TO SEE US WE WILL REPORT FURTHER ON VISIT.
HELMS

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